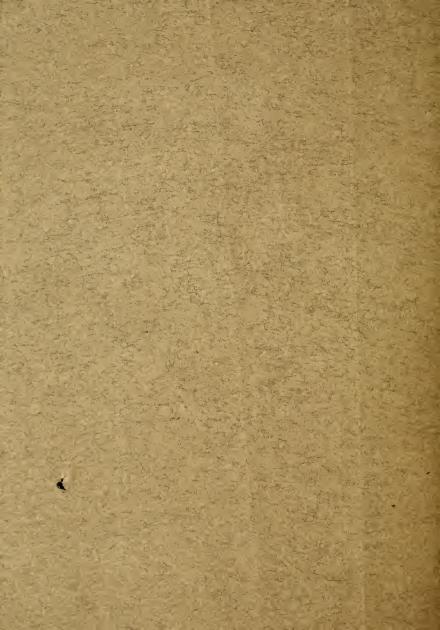
The Bursting of the Unar Cloud

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The Bursting of the War Cloud

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The Bursting of the War Cloud

"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." Ps. 76, 10.



OR weeks we have been reading, talking, thinking, of but one thing, the war that so suddenly, so unexpectedly has involved the greater

part of Europe. The war cloud that for years has been hanging over the nations has burst in a cataclysm which may prove second only to that which swept over the world when the Roman Empire was broken up and the long night of the Dark Ages began. Ten nations are already engaged; eight others are mobilized in the fear of being drawn into the conflict. Sixteen millions of men are today under arms. Never before in history was war waged on so vast a scale with so destruc-

tive and deadly instruments; war in the air, on the land, on the sea, and in the waters under the sea, with aeroplanes, dirigibles, sub-marines, mines, motor cars, wireless telegraph, electric devices and chemical explosives of all kinds. It seems as if the arts and sciences of civilization had been fostered for the express purpose of destroying civilization.

One can trace the chain of causes and consequences as far back as he pleases, but for present purposes we need not go further back than six years. In 1908, in the heart of the Macedonian mountains, a Turkish officer sent a telegram to Sultan Abdul Hamid demanding constitutional government for Turkey. Out of that event and what followed came a Turkish parliament. To that parliament Bosnia and Hertzegovina demanded the right to send delegates, for by the treaty of Berlin they were suzerain to Turkey, though turned over to Austria for administration. The claim caused embarrassment at Vienna, ending in the high handed annexation of these provinces by Austria. The Serbs, inflamed to the point of war, were restrained by Russia, who was not then ready for war. With their dreams of national independence and grandeur the Serbs felt themselves cheated once more by Austria, and out of the race hatred smoldering and flaming for centuries came the assassination at Sarajevo of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his morganatic wife by a Serb boy nineteen years old. Austria, after an ex-parte examination in which only one side was heard, sent a peremptory note to Servia demanding the crushing out of all agitation against Austria and the punishment of those accused of complicity in the crime, with Austrian officials making the investigation and sitting in judgment, demanding a final answer in forty-eight hours. Of the eleven demands of Austria Servia granted all save one, and for that asked further information as to how it could be complied with without infringing her national sovereignty guaranteed by the treaty of Berlin. The reply was not deemed satisfactory, and without waiting even for the forty-eight hours to elapse Austria declared war, asserting that she could not wait as Servia was mobilizing against her. Russia began mobilizing at once, asserting that Austria was mobilizing on her border. Germany declared war on Russia because she would not discontinue mobilization, and upon France for the same reason. Belgium was forced into war to protect her independence, and Great Britain by her treaty guaranteeing the neutrality of Belgium, and because her honor and safety were at stake. So in eight days the fat was in the fire and the devils singing the hallelujah chorus. The bloodiest war in history was begun and with the least apparent justification.

Whatever causes may have been at work beneath the surface, of racial antipathies and conflicting civilizations, pan-German or pan-Slavic, of commercial rivalries and national jealousies, of popular upheavals and personal ambitions, one thing stands out quite clear, that the immediate occasion was only a pretext; that Austria for reasons of her own, possibly good and necessary ones, was determined upon war, would brook no interference, desired no mediation, would grant no time for consideration, would accept no satisfaction save complete and

impossible surrender. On the 23rd of August the New York Times published on five pages one of the most important and illuminating documents ever given to the public, called the White Paper, issued by the government of Great Britain, giving all the diplomatic correspondence of the British Foreign Office with the governments of Austria, Germany, France, Russia, and Italy during the two weeks preceding the declaration of war and the two days following. In these diplomatic interchanges, that will be studied as long as history is read, we see history in the making and are put in position to judge of the motives and policies of the nations. We see Austria putting her quarrel with Servia above the peace of Europe. We see England putting the peace of Europe above all other things, and striving through the tireless efforts of her Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, to avert war. We see France, Russia and Italy joining with England in the tender of their good offices for peace. We see Germany assenting in principle to the exercise of a joint mediating influence, but leaving the im-

pression that her appeals to Vienna were half-hearted and perfunctory, of failure to use her undoubtedly great influence with Austria to dissuade her from the fatal step. Upon the events which swiftly followed Austria's declaration of war, the orders for mobilization, Germany's demand on Russia and France that they should cease, her attempts to persuade or bribe England to remain neutral, England's firm refusal to make war-like commitments until Belgium's peril and her own honor and self preservation made further hesitation impossible, this correspondence throws a most revealing light.

It is also quite clear that no one wanted war. Certain persons or parties for reasons of their own may have desired it. Excited crowds, hysterical through the gross misrepresentations of a subsidized press, momentarily may have clamored for it, but the sober mind of the nations was opposed to it. England certainly did not want war, France did not want war and was not ready for it. Servia did the utmost that a self-respecting nation could do to avoid it. I do not believe

that Germany wanted war save as essential to the fulfillment of her great ambition to become the dominant power of Europe. Austria, apparently on the verge of dissolution, believed that in a successful war was her only hope of unity. None of them wanted war save as forced into it by circumstances. Here is the devilishness of the situation. Some force, mysterious, impalpable, devilish, seemed to compel war, driving the nations into it against all their best interests, confusing issues, paralyzing counsels, exciting animosities. Today the Heavens look down on the nations of Europe driven into the most destructive war of history which in their deepest hearts they hate, from which there seemed no escape. That is the devilishness of the situation.

Moreover each nation firmly believes itself in the right and its opponents in the wrong. Each is patriotic, self-sacrificing, believing in the justice of its cause and that God is on their side. Germany, seeing its commerce prostrated, its wealth wasted, its fields and factories deserted, marches to possible wounds

and death, crying "Das Vaterland oder Tod." French, Russians, English, Belgians are going into battle singing their national hymns. If there were no patriotism there would be little war. If men did not love their country they would not fight and die for it. If there were no self-sacrifice, no heroism, no devotion, no idealism, nothing but commercialism, the worship of money and the love of self, there could be no war save that of mercenaries. Let us do these people the justice of believing, whatever we may think of their rulers, that they believe themselves in the right, and are influenced by motives good as well as evil. Let us reserve our censure until more is known, but be unreserving of our sympathy, our pity, our helpful ministration.

Upon one man more than any other the responsibility of this tremendous calamity must rest; a man of great gifts and unwearying industry, of a singularly pure and earnest character and a deep religious nature, believing that he is called of God to his work and placed by the Divine Hand in his position, a man of vast plans and ambitions, of supreme self-confidence and inflexible determination, on his shoulders rests a burden almost too great for human endurance. Just before the war broke out I read a book, "Germany and the Germans," by one who had made a careful study of their history, institutions and conditions. One sentence impressed me so much that I often quoted it: "Whether there will be war and when there will be war depends upon one man. When the Emperor William presses the button there will be war; until he presses the button there will be no war." Whatever we may think of his personality or his policy, for the great German nation, the youngest of the great nations of Europe, barely forty years old, in this short time becoming the strongest power of Europe, with a development, commercial, industrial, agricultural, educational, as well as naval and military unequaled in history, the leader of the world in many departments of science, art, philosophy, literature, medicine, jurisprudence, civic administration and social reform; a patient, plodding, hard working, economical, homeloving, law-abiding, intensely patriotic people, now called to stand almost alone against three of the greatest nations of Europe and three smaller ones, together with the growing power of the Orient; in this their hour of supreme trial and probable humiliation and retribution, we ought to think with sympathy and sorrow as our misguided brethren.

For England, our nearest of kin, we may have not only sympathy but I think something of admiration. There is no doubt truth in the charge of commercial jealousy and naval rivalry, but let us remember that England's position is unique. The other nations of Europe with their wider territory are in large measure self-feeding, but there are barely two weeks between England and starvation, save as she controls the sea. The day that any other navy even approximately equals hers, England ceases to be an independent power. There is something in the serious, dignified, determined way in which Great Britain has gone into this struggle which appeals to our admiration. The tone of her press and people toward Germany has been re-

strained and merciful. While condemning the policy of Germany the papers have been full of appeals for the kindly treatment of the Germans. Before the German consulate for days stood a long line waiting for transportation, and one whose rooms were opposite writes me that there was no hiss, or groan, or insult, or blow, so very different from the corresponding conditions in Germany. Seriously, steadily, England is gathering her forces for what may be her life and death struggle, and from all over the world her colonies are responding to her need. I saw a caricature lately that touched me. On a lonely rock looking out over the sea stands an old lioness with her mouth open in a mighty roar. From all sides, climbing, pushing, hurrying, come her cubs, little New Zealand and Africa, bigger Australia and India, and biggest of all, standing close and joining in her roar, stands Canada. touched me almost to tears. Let me quote a sentence from a letter recently received from a lady in London: stood in a great crowd before Buckingham Palace waiting for the King and Queen to come out, joining with them in singing 'God Save the King' as if it were my own national hymn, with the tears raining down my cheeks." I think that is the way we should feel for England.

Of France we must think in the perspective of forty years, when defeated, crushed, prostrate under the feet of Germany, she was compelled to sue for peace, and peace was granted, not generously as to a brave foe, but on the most humiliating and crushing terms, taking away two of her fairest provinces, imposing an indemnity that was meant to cripple her for half a century and render her incapable of interfering with German domination. Is it any wonder that this is written ineffaceably on her memory and the terrible word Revanche enters into her policy?

For brave little Belgium asserting her independence against all the power of Germany, knowing well the cost, and all that it must involve of devastated country, ruined cities, impoverished, suffering people, by her heroic struggle delaying the plans of invasion, and giving to

England and France the time so sorely needed; sympathy for her sorrows is almost lost in admiration of her courage. The name of Belgium will go down in history with that of Switzerland, that in like manner resisted the power of Austria, of Burgundy, and of the Holy Roman Empire.

However we may hate the relentless, ambitious and cruel policies of Russia, we can have only sympathy for the Russian soldier, perhaps the determining force in this great struggle. Heavy and slow in movement, not intelligent but obedient, he has a stubborn courage that will go wherever his officers lead, and hold a position while the life lasts. In one of the battles with Japan regiment after regiment was wiped out almost to a man under a murderous artillery fire but without thought of retreat. They were ordered to hold the position and they held it at last only with their dead bodies. One of the most pathetic and tragic pictures in literature is that of the Russian Ploughman in a book called, "Down Among Men," by Will Comfort. In the Japanese war a Russian conscript after

fighting for hours rises to his feet, saying, "What am I fighting for? My little field of grain is unreaped, my wife and children are starving, and I am fighting for I know not what." He throws down his gun, an officer steps up, puts a pistol to his breast, and shoots him down. As his life blood gushes out he says: "My children are starving and I am dying for I know not what." I cannot do it justice, but I venture to think that the picture of the Ploughman will live in literature with Millet's Angelus on canvas.

The picture represents hundreds of thousands, even millions, of men today taken from their fields and firesides, leaving no one to do their work, fighting and dying for they know not what. Not one in a thousand has any idea what the war is really about or has any real interest in it. They must die because they are told to die. How long must this condition continue in which those that sacrifice, suffer and die in war, have nothing to say about the question whether there shall be war; in which three emperors, one senile, one subject to melancholia, and one who has shown an unbal-

anced mind, may give the signal that plunges Europe into mourning and desolation? The wars of the past have been largely kingmade wars; this is an imperial war for imperial ends. The appeal to patriotism, or rather to race hatred, is the hypocrisy of world politics. In order to preserve the prestige on which thrones stand the sentiment of racial antipathy is sedulously cultivated. It is kept alive by kingcraft and militarism long after the influences of civilization are engaged in destroying it. Science, art, literature, music, commerce are working together for the welding of races in a common interest, while kings and armies keep aglow the embers and fan the flames of interracial hatred. The dynastic idea, with its divine right of kings is an anachronism; it has carved up the states of Europe to suit the ideas of monarchs, regardless of race and blood. The dynasty of the Hapsburgs, the Hohenzollerns, the Romanoffs, with their autocratic governments, their exclusive, arrogant, swaggering, military caste, belong to the past. The spirit of democracy with its dangers and its advantages is the power of the present.

This war marks the failure of diplomacy. Four treaties have already been violated, the word of nations proved worthless, and the Chancellor of Germany expresses his surprse and indignation that Great Britain should go to war for "a mere scrap of paper." An Austrian statesman says, "Politics cannot be measured by the standard of the petty tradesmen's every day morality," in other words by common honesty. It marks the failure of great alliances to preserve The Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente that were supposed to make war impossible have only increased the extent and intensity of the conflict. It marks the failure of mighty armaments, expending annually two billions of the people's savings, to preserve peace. It exposes the fallacy of the old argument that preparation for war is the only preservation of peace. That old lie is discredited forever. Has not this greatest of wars leapt straight out of an armed peace such as the world has never known? Can it be doubted that this made arbitration impossible, because at least one of the nations, organized and equipped for war to the last button, was confident of its strength. The utmost preparation for war has utterly and hopelessly failed to preserve peace.

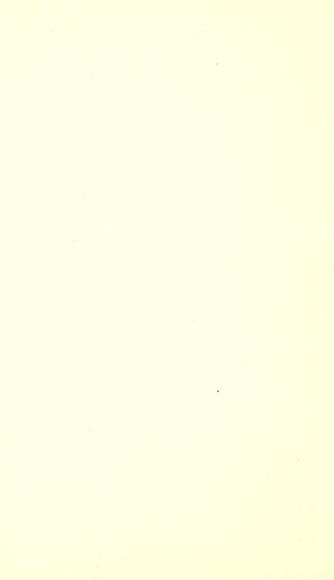
When and how the war will end no one can say; the boldest prophets abashed The factors are so numerous, the combinations so vast, the ultimate possibilities so tremendous as to take away one's breath. Will the power of the British Empire be broken, France again crushed, Russia blocked, and Germany, taking possession of Belgium and Holland, annexing Austria and her Balkan provinces, be the dominant power and lord of Europe from the North Sea to the Adriatic? Or will the German Empire, crushed under the weight of its foes, come forth a bleeding wreck, shorn of its colonies and border provinces, its wonderful industrialism and merchant marine hopelessly destroyed, Austria disintegrated, and Russia triumphant, mean the establishment of a Slavic dominion stretching from the Arctic Ocean to the Aegean Sea, and threatening western civilization? Will the social order break down under the frightful strain, and governments, with shattered armies and bankrupt treasuries, crumble before the attack of a desperate, hunger stricken proletariat inflamed by a gospel of social revolution, and the old Europe go down in a welter of anarchy? Or will bloodshed and battle so intensify racial hatred as to plunge the world in a long cycle of wars, another Iron Age in which the strength and flower of civilization are trampled under foot, and a bleeding, exhausted, paralyzed Europe become the prey of the vast hordes of the Orient?

God forbid. Surely this cannot be. And where is God, and what is He doing in all this hate and cruelty and destruction of human life? What is its relation to the government of a righteous and merciful God? As we read our Bible and our history we cannot help seeing that God often permits men to work out their own choices and decisions to their logical issues. He tries to lead them in His ways that are ways of peace and righteousness, but if they will not walk in His ways nor have His guidance, He lets them follow their own ways even to the

bitter end, to learn by sad experience the folly and sorrow of their ways, that "His ways are higher than their ways and His thoughts than their thoughts." This is the meaning of the great book of Isaiah. The prophet told the people that their only safety was in avoiding alliances with the neighboring powers. They would not listen, and formed an alliance with Egypt on the south, with Syria on the north, and by these very alliances brought down upon them the mighty forces of Assyria, desolating their country, destroying their cities, and carrying them into captivity. The prophet told them to trust in the Lord, not in policies of force. They said "we will trust in horses and chariots," and their horses and chariots proved their ruin. God suffered the Hebrew politicians to work out their own choices to their ultimate issue, bringing suffering to them but final good to the world. The nations of Europe, when and where the movement began matters not, determined to secure safety by the force of great armaments, and to make sure of peace by federations for war. God is letting them work out their own choices to their log-

ical issues, which after unutterable loss and sorrow will bring good to the world. Out of the bitter experience of war in its worst horrors, its most destructive form, on its widest scale, war perhaps long protracted and involving nations now at peace, wili come at last such a horror of war that with one voice the nations will cry, Never again! The result will be the elimination of insensate brute force as the arbiter of international relations, and the enthronement at last of reason and sense and justice as rightful and vital factors of the interrelations of Europe and the world. The states of Europe will one day, God grant it may be soon, be federated on a foundation of international agreement, with an international court to administer the laws, and an international army to execute them. This is the goal toward which all this is working, a federation of nations with methods of unified compulsion, compelling each State by international forces to accept the decision of international courts; even as now the municipalities or states of each nation are compelled by national forces to submit to national laws. Already we

have the United States of Germany with more than thirty kingdoms and principalities that fifty years ago were independent and often warring powers now federated under one central government. We have the United States of Austria: Bohemia. Moravia, Silesia, Galicia, Dalmatia, Istria and several others, with different races, speaking different languages, under one government. We have the United States of Italy: Neapolitan, Roman, Tuscan, Venetian, half a century ago at frequent war with each other, now peaceful and prosperous in their union; the United States of Great Britain: Scotland, Ireland, Wales, England, Australia, Canada. The same process of federation which has been so vastly for the peace and prosperity of the world needs only to be carried further and our children will see the United States of Europe as our fathers in their wisdom founded the United States of America. This is our dream, the dream of patriot, prophet, priest, statesman, and no wild dream, but a sure issue toward which the world is moving, and never faster than in this time of seeming dissolution.



Addenda

The opinions not of politicians but of the prominent preachers of England, the preachers of peace, may be of interest to many. Dr. John Clifford of the Westbourne Park Church, London, a delegate to the Peace Conference at Constance, which he was prevented by the war from reaching, said to his people a month ago today:

"You ask me. Why are we dragged into this strife? Why could we not have kept aloof? Was not that our duty? Does not our island position demand it?

I give you my answer. It is the best I can supply at present. But I ask you to form your own conclusions. You know how intensely I hate, and persistently oppose. war. To me it is a thousand times accursed. It is

anti-Christian, inhuman, wicked, devilish, a tool of savages and not of men. Never have I accepted the false doctrine, "My countryright or wrong." I reject it utterly and always. Our rulers have been in the wrong and I have felt compelled to oppose them. I could do no other. From first to last I fought against the Boer War: it was wrong in its initiation, as it was disastrous in its results. In Germany I felt and said that our course in the war ought to be one of complete neutrality, and drafted a letter as I was returning home, stating the grounds on which I based that conclusion; and when I reached Holborn Viaduct and saw the newspapers, I was grieved and astonished to find that the Government had declared war against Germany. I kept back my letter, and searched high and low for reasons against our entrance into this war. I weighed every item of evidence I could get to fortify the conclusion I had reached that neutrality was obligatory, with the result that I have to confess. and I do it with indescribable reluctance, that there was no escape for us, and that our Government had been forced to the step they had taken. They had not sought war. They had worked for peace—persistently and patiently. Our place in the war was not of choice. We were driven to defend, from the most menacing attack ever made, the most precious ideas and principles, not merely of British and European, but of human well-being,"

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan of Westminster Chapel said on the same day:

"We are at war, after the most strenuous efforts for peace. That is granted. I am among the number of those who to the eleventh hour, and until the striking of the twelfth, hoped that we would remain neutral. I resolutely say to you to-night that after Sir Edward Grey's Statement and the White Paper published on Wednesday, I have no doubt that every effort was made that could be made to avert war. If I have preached from this pulpit for ten years, and if my people who have heard me do not know how all my nature, under Christ's mastery; hates war, then I have failed. Nevertheless. I am bound to say to-night that I am convinced that not to have interfered would have been to have consented to disregard the obligations of national morality. We are at war, after strenuous efforts for peace, in behalf of weaker nations, and in the interests of righteousness and judgment. That is the true attitude of the moment; dark, terrible, and tragic; but necessarv!"

Dr. Wilberforce, Archdeacon of London and Canon of Westminster, said in Westminster Abbey:

"We are at war. not with the German people, but with the insane presumption and intolerable autocratic hunger for aggrandisement of the German Imperial system. As the Prime Minister said, this war has been forced upon us. We believe we are unsheathing our sword in a just cause. We are fighting to fulfill a solemn international obligation, and to vindicate the principle that small nationalities shall not be crushed. We shall suffer, whatever the ultimate issue of the conflict. We shall nationally endure that suffering with quiet resignation, with unmurmuring patience. The "infamous proposal" made to us, and the insolent challenge thrown at us, have already bound this nation into solidarity. We are prepared with unflinching determination, though with tears in our eyes, to offer the lives of our nearest and dearest for the honour of England and for the defence of our beloved country."



